Oregon Shipwrecks

by
Don Marshall

Binford & Mort Publishing
Portland, Oregon

OREGON SHIPWRECKS

Copyright ©1984 by Binford & Mort Publishing
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

Printed in the United State of America
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 84-71477
ISBN: 0-8323-0430-1
First Edition 1984

4

Cascade Head to Nehalem River

THE SHARK + THE ORIOLE = THE MORNING STAR

Early pioneers descended into the lush valleys of the Tillamook and worked mightily to tame the fertile soil. The promise of trade, growth and prosperity in this virgin wilderness inspired the hardy farmers to endure the hardships of total isolation that all too soon left them bereft of the barest of necessities so basic to their survival.

Coffee, tea, sugar, tools, dry goods. . . all lay in abundance just beyond their reach in Portland and the inner cities, but a wall of high mountains and thick forests stood as an impenetrable barrier between the farmer's harvest and the city's trade goods.

Only the sea offered an avenue of salvation for the dying community. A group of desperate pioneers met on September 24, 1854, at the home of Warren Vaughn to discuss the building of a small trading schooner, the one last hope of securing their settlement's future. The inexperienced, but determined, farmers formed a company to undertake the project and accepted Warren Vaughn, Charles Hendrickson, Peter Morgan and O. S. Thomas as primary stockholders. Handshakes sealed the bargain.

Workers hewed out the ship's stern post and keel, then dragged the pieces to Vaughn's landing at the bay. Using the mud flats as their drawing board, the farmers scratched out their calculations and ship design plans and, in spite of the collective inexperience of the group, a trim little ship of some 30 tons,[1] 37½ feet at the keel and a hold of 6½ feet miraculously began to take shape. Lumber for the vessel posed no problem, for the area yielded an excess, but a dire shortage of iron, followed by a scarcity of cordage and sail cloth threatened to put the company out of business. John Hobson of Clatsop came to the rescue with the information that the British[2] Man-of-War *Shark* lay wrecked upon the Columbia bar with pieces of her deck and hull, all heavy with iron, washed-up on the beach near Arch Cape.

Thomas and Vaughn, with five of Thomas' horses, set out for the northwest corner of Tillamook County and the site of the precious flotsam. The expedition was without proper pack saddles, but the men improvised with materials available and headed back over Neahkahnie Mountain with a full load of valuable iron fittings. At the narrowest point of the treacherous trail and at the edge of a high bluff, a cinch strap broke and a pack of iron swung under the horse's belly. The terrified animal, its hind legs over the edge of the escarpment, bellowed and thrashed. Vaughn described the tense moment, ". . . causing no end of excitment, he snorted and jumped

[1] Roughly the same size as Astoria's *Dolly/Jane*.
[2] He was mistaken. The wreck was not a Britisher; it was the American sloop *Shark*, lost September 6, 1846.

around frightening the other horses and we surely had a circus for a few minutes. Thomas had just got over his narrow part of the trail, I called to him for help and talked as pretty as I could to my horse to keep him from moving. . . ."

Thomas rushed in and, while Vaughn pulled on the halter to keep the beast from going over the edge, cut the rest of the restraining tie-straps. Working in unison, the men pulled the horse to safety. They proceeded to Tillamook with no further trouble, but made sure they used proper pack saddles for the succeeding four trips. They packed-out only usable iron, bolts, knees and nails and left two ship's cannon where they laid at the mouth of a little creek near a hemlock tree.

The farmers quickly built a blacksmith's shop and converted left-over ship's lumber into charcoal. Local settler Clark became the town's blacksmith and began re-shaping the *Shark*'s iron. He stated he never knew a ship carried so much iron and when he finished this job, he just might forget farming and head for Portland to supply ships. . . he would most certainly have the necessary experience.

A new avenue of supplies opened to the intrepid shipbuilders when friendly Indians brought word of another wreck ashore near Netarts. Providentially, the ship turned out to be the bark *Oriole* laden with supplies for building a lighthouse at Fort Canby. She ran afoul of the dreaded Clatsop spit on September 18, 1853 and sank in 5½ fathoms, a total wreck. Wave action broke her hull in half and drove ashore near the Netarts bay entrance that half filled with paint, ship blocks, standing mizzen and numerous other valuable ship's items. The Indians, anxious to be of service to their neighbors' shipbuilding project, collected the prized flotsam and offered the entire bonanza for a mere $10.

With all the necessary supplies now on hand, the farmers rushed to finish the project as quickly as possible. Dan Pike's farm supplied lumber; Charles West and John Saunders whipsawed every plank by hand and cut an average of 300 feet per day. Families spent their evening cutting the wrecked *Oriole*'s rigging into six inch lengths, soaking off the tar in hot water and separating the fibers for caulking oakum. The women ground winter wheat in coffee mills, browned it and added chicory to fashion cups of hot brew to soothe sore backs, fingers and sagging spirits. The working men's meals consisted of cheese and cream, for flour supplies had been depleted long ago and the settlers were now running in short supply of sugar and tea.

The little ship promised to be ready for launching on New Year's day, 1855, and all joined forces to celebrate the occasion with a grand feast. Eager hands emptied every pantry and root cellar. Elbridge Trask, Dougherty and Lyman supplied wheat. Mrs. Hiram Smith surrendered some eggs. Necessity became the mother of invention as finely diced and browned potatoes were brewed into a flavorful coffee.

By December, workers secured the last of the ship's planking and made fast her beaming and carlings.[3] Three Indians volunteered to take five horses to Leonard and Green's store in Astoria to purchase pitch and running gear. In a week's time they returned safe and sound with the goods, plus an added bonus of a few pounds of sugar. . . the first of which the settlers had seen in some time.

The line salvaged from the wrecked *Oriole* proved too heavy for the smaller vessel. Peter Morgan, experienced in rope walking, constructed a machine and a rope walk[4] that enabled him to take the heart of the larger lines to produce the needed rigging. Masts and bowsprit were dressed out and raised. Saunders and West completed the rigging while workers sewed sail.

Launching day approached. Some thirty settlers arrived from Hoquarten, Southprairie and Quick's and Trask's farms; Indians arrived from all directions. The enticing aroma of ersatz coffee beckoned one and all to partake of a feast table groaning under the

[3] Short pieces of timber, ranging fore and aft between beams, which served to strengthen beams and deck.
[4] The rope walk was located in front of Geinger's home with its entry in the prairie toward Kilchis Point.

Replica of the Morning Star, *first ship of Tillamook County.* Morning Star II, *engineered by Clarence Sessions and built by eager Tillamook citizens for Oregon's centennial celebration of 1959, is now on display at Tillamook County Creamer Association. The original* Morning Star *was constructed from the remains of earlier Oregon shipwrecks.* *(Marshall collection)*

weight of bread baked from hoarded wheat flour, cheeses and creams.

At the last moment and much to the celebrants' dismay, the farmers discovered they lacked the necessary grease for the ship's launching ways. Although their cattle survived upon the valley's lush grasses, only grain, depleted long ago, produced the fat from which tallow was made. Henderson suggested substituting old-fashioned bay silt, which was in plentiful supply. Thomas and Vaughn voiced serious doubts. Henderson promptly smeared the slippery goo upon two boards, placed one atop the other and jumped upon the two. One of the planks shot from under him and he lay flat upon his back, a painful but effective illustration to prove his point. Thomas remained unconvinced, explaining the weight of the ship pressed all moisture from between the hull and the ways to leave only dry residue which would lock the ship in place.

The group opted to use bay silt and although not one in ten had ever seen a vessel launched, all hands fell to applying sediment by the shovel-full in their anxiety to christen the bay's water with their proud little ship.

At ten o'clock, January 1, 1855, Tillamook settlers and Indians gathered at the bay's edge to celebrate the auspicious event. George Scott of Hoquarten eulogized and after a fine address, closed with, "Ladies and Gentlemen, it has fallen to my share in the program to name this sturdy craft; we hail it as the blessing of a new Tillamook County. We therefore name this schooner the Morning Star of Tillamook." He broke a bottle of water across her bow, in lieu of non-existent wine. Amid deafening roars of the assemblage and the slamming blows of hammers knocking

blocks away, the *Morning Star of Tillamook* shuddered, settled and refused to budge an inch.

Only one solution remained for the stout-hearted farmers. Regardless of the lean qualities of their cattle, a steer must be sacrificed; they must make whatever little tallow they gleaned from the beast suffice for greasing the skids. Trask volunteered one of his steers for the project. Soon, the poor animal's meager remains graced the ways for Tillamook's first vessel to broach the bay's placid waters.

The *Morning Star*, with the spirit of two fine American vessels deep within her bowels, performed beautifully. Soon the beleaguered settlers enjoyed a thriving trade in sugar, coffee, cloth, tools, flour and a multitude of necessities so vital to their continued existence.

MIMI

Beneath the rippling waters of Nehalem a deadly web of sands hungrily awaited the approaching iron-hulled German barque. A low, sticky, February fog camouflaged the danger as the *Mimi*'s Prussian skipper struggled to gain his bearings on this leg of the ship's journey from Callao. His precision-trained German crew leaped to his fog-shrouded commands. The blinded vessel plowed northward past the Nehalem jetty. A mile and a half later, she became firmly embedded upon the north spit.

The contract to re-float the *Mimi* was awarded to the Fisher Engineering and Construction Company. Captain Fisher took command of the situation and, much against the advice of Captain Farley of the Garibaldi Life Saving Station, ordered an unwarranted amount of ballast removed.

Ship, captain and crew remained stranded on the spit for the next two months while the Aryan seamen labored mightily to unload 1300 tons of ballast; all but 900 tons went by the board. The crew positioned two four-ton anchors at sea with attached lines to two barges and readied the ship's donkey engines for the task of pulling in slack from the lines in order to slowly inch the *Mimi* into deep water. As their preparations neared completion, one of the mates dreamed of the *Mimi* under water, a hotel for the dead, with bloated, seaweed-entangled corpses bobbing in and out of submerged hatches. The mate related his nightmare to his companions; the first, second and third mates immediately deserted ship.[5] Their foolish talk started superstitious grumblings among the common crew and Captain Westphal now found it necessary to use a pistol to enforce his orders and to keep the restless sailors aboard.

At a signal given at high tide on April 6th, the donkey engines began winching the huge hawsers against the anchors on one side, tightening the lines to the stranded *Mimi*. Inch-by-inch the vessel rose and slid from her sandy cradle; each inch pulled her into a more precarious position. The ocean suddenly grew angry at these puny mortals who so brazenly thumped each other's backs in anticipated success of robbing her of her prize. A sea larger than the rest slammed the ship in a foaming rage, twisted her sideways and dumped her, masts shoreward, on her side.

Rank after rank of white-sheeted surf marched up and over the capsized *Mimi* to pluck struggling men from the canted deck. The ocean's heaving chest tumbled her human victims into a mass of twisted spars, broken masts and deadly, snaking rigging. Farley and his life-saving crew raced toward the stricken vessel. They tried again and again to approach from the lee side, but entangled wreckage blocked their access to the screaming, trapped men. One by one, the sea devoured her prey.

Fourteen of the German crew, some trapped within the *Mimi*'s bowels, perished one and one-half miles north of the Nehalem jetty, 800 feet out on the north spit, directly west of where Brighton now stands. Salvors Russell Blackburn and Captain Crowe, along with two of their men, died. Only Fisher, Westphal and two of the *Mimi*'s crew survived.

[5] The rate of desertions on French and German sail ships was much lower than that of the British and American Merchant Marine; a mere 2% for the former as compared to 30% for both the latter.

The hull of the capsized German bark Mimi *off Neahkahnie Beach, 18 died.* *(Oregon Historical Society)*

FRIENDLY ENEMIES

The enormity of a shipwreck and its tragic results seldom fails to elicit a sense of the most profound pity from nearly all concerned. People from miles around will rush to the beachfront, mobilize and go to heroic proportions to rescue distressed seamen.

Seamen, who just a few moments prior were mortal enemies blasting each other with tons of hot iron and lead, will strain muscle and sinew against oars in a race to save those escaping a shot-shattered, sinking ship.

The following missives directed to former enemies, along with those letters from friends, give proof of this all-encompassing sense of administering aid to those victims of that electrifying phenomenon. . . shipwreck!

Fort Vancouver, Sept. 11, 1846

Dear Sir: We have just heard of the unfortunate accident which has befallen the Shark on the bar of this river, and we beg to offer our sincere condolence on the distressing event. We also beg to offer every assistance we can render in your present destitute state, and hope you will accept of the few things sent by this conveyance. Captain Baillie having dispatched bread and tea by the Modeste's pinnance anticipated our intention of sending such things. Have the goodness to apply to Mr. Peers for any articles of food or clothing you may want, and they will be at your service if he has them in store. As the people of Clatsop can furnish abundance of beef and potatoes, we are not anxious about your suffering any privation of food. If otherwise, Mr. Peers will do his utmost to supply your wants.

With kind remembrance to the officers, we remain, dear sir, yours truly,

Peter Skeen Ogden,
James Douglass

Neil Howison, &c., &c.

Her Majesty's Sloop Modeste,
Fort Vancouver, Columbia River, Sept. 13, 1846

Sir: It was with the greatest regret that I this morning received information of your vessel being on the sands at the mouth of the Columbia. From the hurried information I have received, I much

fear my boat will be too late to render any assistance in saving your vessel; but in the possibility of your not having been able to save provisions, &c., I beg to offer for your acceptance a few of such articles as are not likely to be obtained at Clatsop.

I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient servant,

Thos. Baillie, Commander

Lieut. Howison,
Commanding U.S. Schooner Shark

Oregon City, September 15, 1846

Dear Sir: Last night we heard the melancholy tidings that the schooner Shark was lost on the South spit. It was very painful intelligence, particularly as we are yet in doubt as to the safety of yourself, officers, and crew. The letter we received at this place state that the probability is, all were saved; which I sincerely hope may be the case; but until we hear of the safety of all, we will be in an unhappy state of suspense. My first feeling was to leave all here, and reach Clatsop as soon as possible, but I am situated in such a way, just at this time, that I cannot leave. Should you not make arrangements to get away in the Mariposa, we have your room in readiness for you, and will be very happy to have you make one of our family, as long as you may remain in the country, and any officers that you may choose for the other room. I perceive the Modeste's launch was to leave with a supply of provisions for you for the present. If you wish anything that I have, let me know, and I will send it down immediately. I have plenty of flour, and I have no doubt but plenty of beef and pork can be obtained here for the crew.

It will give me great pleasure to be of any service to you. Hoping to hear from you soon, and that yourself, officers, and crew are all safe on shore, and in good health,

I remain, dear sir, yours, very truly,

George Abernethy

Captain Neil Howison,
&c., &c., &c.

September 19, 1846

Should a vessel arrive belonging to the firm, I think you will have no difficulty in chartering her to go to California. I shall be happy to render you all the assistance that lies in my power. Should you wish any assistance as it regards money, or anything that I can obtain for you in Oregon, please inform me, and I will at the earliest date endeavor to procure it for you. Please accept my kindest regards to yourself and officers.

Yours truly,
John H. Couch

Capt. Neil Howison

Baker's Bay, Friday, November 9

Sir: I much regret the melancholy disaster which befell your vessel on Wednesday evening, and also my inability to render you any assistance at that time. The Indians tell me there are several lives lost, but I hope such is not true.

I am informed you wish to occupy part of the house at Astoria, it is at your service, as also anything else there in the shape of food or clothing, and I must, at some time apologize for offering you such poor accomodations. I sent off a dispatch to Vancouver yesterday morning, to acquaint them of your distress, and expect an answer Sunday morning.

I remain, sir, yours, most respectfully,

Henry Peers,
Port Agent of Hudson's Bay Company

To Captain Howison,
&c., &c., &c.

Baker's Bay, Columbia River,
December 1, 1846

Dear Governor: One of the few articles preserved from the ship-wreck of the late United States schooner Shark was her stand of colors. To display this national emblem, and cheer our citizens in this distant territory by its presence, was a principle [sic] object of the Shark's visit to the Columbia; and it appears to me, therefore, highly proper that it should henceforth remain with you, as a memento of parental regard from the general government.

With the fullest confidence that it will be received and duly appreciated as such by our countrymen here, I do myself the honor of transmitting the flags (an ensign and union-jack) to your address; nor can I omit the occasion to express my gratification and pride that this relic of my late command should be emphatically the first *United States* flag to wave over the undisputed and purely American territory of Oregon.

With consideration of high respect, I remain your obedient servant,

Neil M. Howison
Lieutenant Commanding United States Navy

Oregon City, December 21, 1846

Dear Sir. I received your esteemed favor of the 1st December, accompanied with the flags of the late U.S. schooner "Shark," (an ensign and union-jack) as a "memento of parental regard from the general government" to the citizens of this Territory.

Please accept my thanks and the thanks of this community for the (to us) very valuable present. We will fling it to the breeze on every suitable

occasion, and rejoice under the emblem of our country's glory. Sincerely hoping that the "star-spangled banner" may ever wave over this portion of the United States, I remain, dear sir, yours truly,

Geo. Abernethy

Neil Howison,
Lieutenant commanding, &c., &c.

Thus, through the medium of a shipwreck, friendships were cemented, rivalries forgotten and all concerned returned to the business of developing this grand, primeval land. Ironically, the wrecked *Shark*'s flag, the first to fly over undisputed Oregon, has been misplaced, lost or destroyed. Hopefully, someday it will be found and restored to its rightful place in Oregon history.

THE INCREDIBLE DRIFT

The American wooden bark, *Emily Reed*, stood in much too close to the sands of Nehalem and much too late to wear ship[6] on the night of February 14, 1908. The weather held typically dark and overcast for several days off the coasts of California and Oregon; Captain Kessel charted the *Reed*'s course, unaware of the inaccuracy of his chronometer.

The ship sailed 102 days out of Newcastle, New South Wales with a load of coal for Portland's hungry industries. The skipper anxiously scanned the sea for the comforting arm of light from the Tillamook Lighthouse sweeping through the darkness.

The blinded bark drove through the breakers bow-on at high tide and hit the beach. Her back broke almost instantly under the weight of her load of coal; her forward section listed to port and the men there were swept into the sea. Captain Kessel, his wife, Second Mate Charles Thompson, seamen Barney Sullivan, H. Franchez and Herman Bertell clung to the sea-washed poop deck until low tide, then made their way through the receding surf to shore. All assumed the missing ship's boat had capsized or disintegrated in the welter of broken masts and tangled lines littering the dead ship. Reports stated that eleven men perished in the tragic episode.

Three days later and 200 miles to the north, the six-ton sloop *Tecla* lay anchored in Neah Bay, Washington. Her crew, aroused by a weak voice hailing their vessel, came to the rescue of Fred Zube and two other survivors from the *Emily Reed*. Seaman Zube nursed a broken arm; all three suffered from exposure and extreme thirst. In the boat with the three men lay the body of the ship's cook; unable to slake his thirst, the unfortunate mariner became delirious and drank sea water.

The ship's loss of life was reduced to eight when news of this incredible 200 mile drift covering more than sixty-six miles per day in a damaged boat with only one oar and no food, water or emergency supplies was flashed to surprised officials at Astoria.

ARGO #1

The twin-screwed steamer *Argo #1* was as uninteresting a little ship as was ever built in 1898. Her 130-foot length fitted easily into any one of a dozen 210-tonners launched during the era of the Alaskan gold rush.

As thousands of gold-fevered sourdoughs stampeded in a frenzied race for Alaskan shores, Ballard and Murphy (formerly the Cleveland Ohio Shipbuilding Co. and now known as Cleveland Alaska Gold Mining Co.) grasped this golden once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to corner Alaskan transportation. They quickly built and launched a coastal trader, *Argo #1* and a river steamer, *Argo #2*.

Argo #1 with *Argo #2* in tow sailed north to lay the foundation for Ballard and Murphy's coveted monopoly. Unfortunately *#2* broke loose en route and foundered off Dixon's Entrance.

[6] The *Reed* was on a port tack, the spanker and mizzen staysail would have to be taken in, the helm put to weather and the mainyard squared, with the spanker in her head would fly to leeward. From this position she would be running downwind; her foresails would be braced around and her jibs sheeted to port. The ship would still be in danger as she would be running parallel to the beach and would have to claw off. She would be brought around to a starboard tack, set her spanker and staysail and bring the head into the wind. The mainyard would be braced round and she would now pull on the starboard with all sails trimmed and drawing.

tually scrapped in Japan in 1935.

Raccoon 12/31/1813 British, sloop of war, grounded on Columbia River bar and lost a portion of her keel, which is now on display at the Columbia River Maritime Museum in Astoria. See story, "Raccoon."

Rambler 12/1859 En route Neah Bay-San Francisco with a cargo of oil and peltries under Captain A. J. Tuthill. The schooner came ashore on Clatsop Spit in March; no trace of her captain or crew of four was ever found.

Republic 2/7/1945 Troller, shark boat. Lost at sea off Cape Disappointment. Four dead.

Ricky 7/22/1949 Fishing boat lost on Peacock Spit.

Rival 9/13/1881 Bark, American, three masts, built at Baltimore in 1869, 299 tons, 130′ × 31′ × 12′. Ship left harbor with Captain Thomas B. Adams en route San Francisco-Knappton under pilot Hansen. The ship and her cargo of shingles and hay were a total loss on Peacock Spit.

**Roanoke* 1911 Steamer, iron, three decks and two masts, 2354 tons, 267′ × 40.5′ × 16.4′, built in 1882 at Chester, Pennsylvania and operated by North Pacific SS Co. Carrying passengers and freight, she ran on the bar at the Columbia; one life was lost. In May of 1916, she turned turtle off Port San Luis, Ca., where 47 out of 50 people lost their lives. See *California Shipwrecks*.

Rose Ann 2/8/1948 Fish dragger, built in 1946 at Jensen's Boatyard in Seattle. Captain Roy Collins. Vessel foundered in a fierce storm east of the Columbia Lightship. Four dead.

Rosecrans 1/7/1913 Tanker. Wrecked on the Columbia bar. See story, "*Rosecrans*."

S. D. Lewis 3/16/1865 Brig lost at the entrance to the Columbia River. NFI.

Sea Thrush 12/4/1932 Freighter, 5538 tons, 8800 deadweight, built by Northwest Steel Co. in 1918 at Portland and owned by Shepard SS Co. Ex-*West Cherow* and ex-*Westland*. Under Captain Ernest J. Landstrom and en route Puget Sound to Vancouver, Wash., the vessel ran aground due to faulty charts. Thirty-one crewmen, one female passenger and one stowaway were rescued by the U.S.C.G. *Redwing* and some $50,000 in cargo was salvaged before the ship broke in two near the south jetty and was swallowed by the sands.

Shark 9/10/1846 U.S. Sloop of War, schooner rigged, 184 tons, built in 1821 on the east coast at the cost of $23,627. Her 12 guns consisted of 10 carronades and 2 long-toms, all 32 pounders. See stories "Friendly Enemies" and "The *Shark* + The *Oriole* = *The Morning Star*."

Staghound 6/28/1898 Steamer, sternwheel, built at Portland in 1898. While under tow 30 miles off the Columbia River, she was severely damaged. Her hull was re-built into the river tug *Hercules*, which later sank at Three Mile Rapids on the Washington side of the Columbia.

**Sulphur* 1839 HMS, 300 tons. This British warship stranded briefly at the mouth of the Columbia and for many years Clatsop Spit was known as Sulphur Spit.

Strathblane 11/3/1891 British grain ship, 1300 tons. Under Capt. George Cuthell, the vessel, 19 days from Honolulu, missed the entrance to the Columbia and became a total loss on the north beach. An erratic chronometer was the cause of the disaster. Seven people, including the captain, were drowned. Captain J. D. Murray was aboard and survived to marry Miss Frances D. Taylor of Pacific County, while Charles A. Payne, an apprentice seaman, took heed of his narrow escape to eventually become editor of the *Chinook Observer*.

Susan 1/11/1952 Cannery tender, 52 tons. She became unmanageable and was abandoned west of the Columbia River. She eventually washed ashore on Peacock Spit about 500 yards west of the jetty.

Tillamook 2/1876 She and her crew of seven were lost on Clatsop Spit. NFI.

Tokuyo Maru 5/3/1921 Steamer. On fire 60 miles SW of Columbia. A total loss included the ship, her cargo of sodium nitrates en route to Japan and eight of her crew.

**Tonquin* 3/22/1811 Ship, American, 269 tons. She brought part of the Astor party on their expedition to settle the west coast. Eight men drowned trying to sound the bar; the following day, two more met with the same fate. Throughout history, Captain Jonathan Thorn has been unjustly chastised for supposedly causing the deaths of these seamen. See story, "*E Inoa O Kanaloa*" and the loss of the *Hazard* crewmen.

Unknown 2/1876 Sloop, built at Tillamook a few months earlier and probably named *Dreadnaught*. Under the guidance of her builder and with a crew of five (all *over eighty years* of age with the exception of one), she went on the Clatsop Spit for a total loss. Dead: Captain William Terwilliger, 80; Joseph Centen (builder), 83; Indian George (pilot), 85; Richard Hall, 83; William Bailey, 86; and James Forest, a mere 20.

U. S. Grant 12/19/1871 Propeller steamer, built at East Portland by Clinton Kelly in 1865, used to carry passengers and mail between Astoria and Ilwaco. 55 tons, 70′ × 15′ × 6′. While Skipper J. D. Gray and his crewman brother A. W. Gray were below decks, she broke from her moorings at Fort Canby and grounded on Sand Island. The men were saved, the ship wasn't.

Vancouver 5/8/1848 Bark, British, 400 tons and under charter to the Hudson Bay Co. En route London-Vancouver, Washington, Captain Mouatt turned his vessel over to pilot S. C. Reeves, the first of many pilots on the bar of the Columbia. Reeves, for whatever reasons, struck the sands around the middle of the river; some accused him of plotting to pillage the wreck. Although these charges were never proved, Reeves resigned his position as a pilot. The ship was a

5

Cape Falcon to Cape Disappointment

THE *PETER IREDALE*
(A study in whimsy)

Coastguardsman Robert Farley had just about completed his early morning beach patrol along the Clatsop Spit when his faithful companion, a non-descript mutt named Riley, drew his attention seaward with a high-pitched staccatoed barking as he raced toward the surf line on each ebbing wave, then danced back in retreating hops as the frothy liquid of the Pacific advanced up the sandy beach. Surfman Farley squinted through the thick coastal haze and caught a glimpse of a large mist-shrouded mass of creaking hull and twisted rigging.

"C'mon, Riley, we'll go wake up the boys." With this laconic comment, young Farley spun on his heel and double-timed it back along the two and one-half mile route to the Point Adams Lifesaving Station to summon help for what, in time, would become one of the most famous shipwrecks on the Pacific coast.

The broaching of the *Peter Iredale* on a coast described with many a grim countenance as the "Graveyard" produced the most singularly unexciting shipwreck scenario in maritime history. The four-masted barque simply grounded; the crew abandoned ship via breaches buoy, but had they waited for low tide, they could have easily waded ashore.

A few adventuresome boys played hookey from school, Huckleberry Finn-style, but even that proved unnecessary for the principal dismissed classes later in the day so the entire school could view the wreck. Thus, a total lack of a dramatic rescue or legendary heroism caused the entire affair to become rather drab.

The only excitement connected to the wreck occurred the next day when Malcolm Grider, of nearby Warrenton, attempted to row around the *Iredale* in his small boat, fell overboard and drowned. Railroad officials ran a special excursion train to the now tranquil wreck scene of the land-locked vessel. It ran on Sundays only and, of course, after church services.

The *Peter Iredale*, majestic in her day, gradually fell into a slumber disturbed only by the distant cawing of local gulls and the snap, snap, snapping of George Eastman's famous little black box, the "Kodak."

Some fifty-four years later, dark clouds, far more ominous than the ones that steered the *Iredale* to her final resting place, suddenly loomed over the tranquil scene and its nearby communities. It came in the form of a letter dated June 2, 1960, directed to Leonard Lindas, Chief Counsel for the Oregon Highway Commission. The missive, originating from the desk of Oregon City Attorney Jack Caldwell, stated in simple terms that his client, Cliff Hendricks, held legal title to the remains of the *Peter Iredale* and intended to take immediate possession of his property. Alarmed, Chief Counsel Lindas quickly contacted Guy

Boyington, District Judge of Clatsop County. Judge Boyington flew into a rage and burned up the wires to City Manager E. R. Baldwin, of Warrenton.

Although Warrenton is a small community, its city boundaries are as legendary as those of Los Angeles. Everyone knows that when the beach recedes, Warrenton's city lines recede, but when the sand is continually added to by forces of nature or a man-made device like the huge rock-jetty on the nearby Columbia River, then the area claimed by the energetic little town grows substantially larger. These antics have been undisputed since the turn of the century and the total area now claimed by the city now safely includes the remains of the old four-masted barque. Yes, Sir, no doubt about it; Warrenton owned the ship and no "dry-land foreigner is going to have anything to do with her"... the terminology "foreigner" referring to anyone born outside of an approximate five mile radius of the sleepy little coastal town. Ergo, Oregon City lay an unacceptable one hundred and four miles inland and, in spite of its locale on the beautiful Willamette River, it was and still is considered "dry land."

Hendricks remained adamant regarding his claim of ownership to the rusty hulk... the property he inherited from his deceased father included legal title to the ship as purchased in 1908. He felt an obligation to carry out the original intent of his father, that of scrapping out the remains of the *Peter Iredale*.

Even the most meek jolted screaming to their feet at this electrifying news. Citizens from far away Astoria (six miles) congregated on street corners to, at first, mutter amongst themselves, then to vehemently agree with soap-box orators who harangued them into action. Fred Andrus, editor of the *Astoria Daily Budget*, wasted no time in his race for the Clatsop County Courthouse to begin a detailed, albeit frantic, search of all records denoting sales for the year of 1908. He found nothing in regard to the ship *Peter Iredale*.

The following day, Thursday, June 4, the *Daily Budget* smugly announced the upstart's claim *invalid* and confidently assured its readership that the tempest was over. A grand sigh of relief could be heard all over the county, until the next day....

An overly efficient clerk in the County Records Office (some people held that he was a spy placed in that position years before by Oregon City) did not halt his search with the year 1908, but continued on into 1909, 1910, 1911, methodically plowing his way through the dusty tomes to June of 1917 and lo-and-behold, there on the 14th, the late Mr. Hendricks did indeed record his purchase of the wreck in question for a paltry $25, adding insult to injury to this now priceless relic.

"Foul," screamed the Warrentonites. "Tampered records," claimed the legal minds of Clatsop County.

"*Alerte! Aux Armes! Aux Armes!*" once again rang through the old fur trapper's post of Astoria.

Judge Boyington, acutely aware of the county's weakened legal position, smoothed over his prior thundering threats of jail and referred to *Mr.* Hendricks in a more gracious manner. "Perhaps," he stated, "if Mr. Hendricks would donate his ship to the people of Oregon, the county would mount a plaque with his name on the wreck, and," he added as an afterthought, "Saint Peter [of Iredale?] would smile favorably when they meet," which seemed a definite possibility not too far in the future, according to a number of authoritative sources.

Offers of salvation flooded Clatsop County. Portland businessman Mike DeCicco, in order to keep the *Iredale* on the beach, generously agreed to meet any price a salvage firm might pay for the rusting hulk. An organization called the Oregon Coast Ad Club wished to purchase the wreck and remove it in sections to "20 Miracle Miles" near Lincoln City, there to re-assemble and preserve the *Peter Iredale* as a tourist attraction.

As tempers and emotions rose to a fever-pitch, perhaps the unkindest cut of all came from Cliff Hendricks' own attorney, Jack Caldwell. He flatly stated, "... my client has a valid claim, even though the state and county have both exercised the Right of Ownership without actually owning the ship.

Probably the most photographed wreck in the world. The Peter Iredale *is visited daily by hundreds of camera buffs.* *(Oregon Historical Society S.P.&S. Collection)*

They have neither been interested enough to preserve the hulk or even inform the people and," he continued, "if Mr. Hendricks decides not to salvage the ship, I am going to suggest that he give it to *Clackamas County*. At least we, in this county, have taken adequate steps to preserve our historical monuments. We can put it right in front of the courthouse."

The June 5th edition of Oregon City's *Enterprise-Courier* dutifully reported the rumor of a twenty-four hour machine gun watch posted on Clatsop Beach near the wreck.

When Mr. Hendricks opined he wished to visit *his* property, Judge Boyington distastefully issued orders to County Sheriff Carl Bondietti requesting the proper protection for the alleged ship owner and, as he had been informed, a party of engineers and salvage experts expected to accompany the unwanted transgressor. Then, with an unexpected twinge of compassion toward Mr. Hendricks, the good judge directed an admonition: "...we won't shoot you, but the people of Clatsop County will lay down their lives for this vessel. Of course I would accompany you *if I had the time*, but for your own protection you had better keep your intentions to yourself until you are safely out of the county."

Enterprise-Courier, June 7: "...survey will be by landing party from the sea. A corps of lawyers working for the Highway Department have begun a search of not only the records of the various transfers of the *Peter Iredale*, but the state abandonment laws, the admiralty laws and the states rights of any property over which it has exercised jurisdiction."

Lindas, in charge of this august group, stated the first order of business was to establish ownership before granting permission to move the wreck across state property.

"Now," said State Park Superintendent C. H. Armstrong, "since the State owns the Fort Stevens State Park where the wreck is located and the State owns the beach, if the moving of the hulk affects the park in any way, I shall recommend against its removal!"

City Manager Baldwin stated flatly, "The *Iredale* is in the City Limits—the town will resist."

Fred Andrus of the *Astoria Budget* let loose with a broadside in his editorial...if Hendricks owned the ship as he claimed then it was obvious that he owed some fifty-four years of property taxes to the state in addition to fines and rental for abandoning a vehicle (the ship) on a public highway (the beach) and occupying that space for the last five decades!

The issue became further clouded when Judge Boyington, while thumbing through an old family album, came across a long-forgotten incident some thirty years prior when *he* and William Larson laid claim to the *Iredale*, posted a "No Trespassing" sign and photographed it to legalize their claim against a band of junkies who intended to cut up the ship for scrap metal. Of course, just exactly what authority the two men evoked was not rightly remembered, but no doubt it must be legal. Besides, if Mr. Hendricks believed himself to be the owner, then why, by thunder, didn't he say so *then*?

Cliff Hendricks maintained a stoic aplomb throughout the mounting storms of protest and cold-heartedly proclaimed, "Once it is clear, the State, the County of Clatsop, and the City of Warrenton have *assumed private property*, then I shall instruct my attorneys to submit our ownership claim and we will proceed with whatever plans I might have for *my* ship."

Oh, the ignominy of it all.

But wait, take heart. That obscure little clerk in the County Courthouse, the one who waited until darkness fell before venturing from the safety of the fortress-like stone confines of his place of employment, the one who scurried rat-like from shadow to shadow and pillar to post seeking the sanctuary of his humble home against the slings and barbs of former friends, found the instrument with which to redeem his social standing and to verily elevate him to the status of sainthood amongst his fellow Clatsopites.

Through that same devotion to duty with which he persevered in uncovering that odious Document of Sale of a treasured monument for $25 to Mr. Hendricks, he now walked forth among the people, fearing not their hoots and boos, for he clutched firmly in his upraised fist a *second* Bill of Sale, dated three days after that first treacherous document, transferring ownership of the wreck from Mr. R. E. Hendricks to an unknown person by the name of J. A. Moshor for the magnificent and face-saving sum of $325.00! Standing before the multitudes, he raised both arms toward the heavens and proclaimed the bones of the *Peter Iredale* would,

for all eternity, remain undisturbed upon the gentle sands of Clatsop Beach. The crisis was ended.

At last the weary citizens could now direct their attentions to the mundane problems of everyday living. . . President Eisenhower's

Happy couple cavorting on the wrecked Peter Iredale. *View from 'midship forward.*
(Wayne Jensen, Jr. collection)

Another view of the famous Peter Iredale. *(Oregon Historical Society)*

trouble with Red China and Gary Powers' abortive U-2 flight over the USSR. Mr. Hendricks, the sheriff and Judge Boyington could sit back and laugh uproariously over the practical joke they had so successfully pulled off and all would be quiet again.

. . . until the descendants of the unknown Mr. J. A. Moshor appear on the scene.

WILLIAM AND ANN

Journal and letters of David Douglas.[1] Letter to Sir William J. Hooker, Sept. 14, 1829:

. . . Did you hear of the total wreck of the Hudson's Bay Company's ship on the sand bar at the entrance of the Columbia River, with the loss of every individual on board, forty six in number, on the 11th of March last?

It was the vessel in which Dr. Scouler and I went out in 1824, when the late Captain was First Mate. It is stated that those who escaped from the wreck were destroyed by my old friends, the Chenooks [sic].

This may be true, though I confess I entertain some doubts, for I have lived among those people for weeks and months. . . .

THE FIRST COLUMBIA PILOT

Dangers of the Columbia Bar were readily apparent from the time Robert Gray discovered the river in 1792; the eventual arrival of the Astor party proved it all too certainly with their loss of eight men embarked to sound the channel for the *Tonquin*.

The Chinooks' Chief Concomly was the first to guide ships over the bar on a business basis, but even then the only safe method involved sounding ahead in small boats to lay out a channel.

Lt. William Slacum, USN, charted the first reliable survey of the entrance in 1837, but river run-offs decreed it only a temporary finding. A legislative act by the territory in 1846 provided for an examination and subsequent licensing of pilots for the bar and river clear to the head of navigation.

The first pilot to prove competent was S. C. Reeves. He received high praise for his ability but suffered dismissal due to false charges of deliberately wrecking and looting the brig *Vancouver*. Reeves left in 1847 for San Francisco and there drowned in a boating accident.

The lack of competent pilots caused ships much delay and, in one case, the brig *Sequin* used up fifty-four days tacking back and forth in the river while en route from Astoria to Portland. Service was re-established on Christmas Day, 1849, when two New York harbor pilots, Captains J. G. Hustler and Cornelius White, anchored their sixty-foot eastern pilot schooner *Mary Taylor*[2] in Astoria.

Business to the fast-growing towns upriver soon surpassed the capabilities of these two captains. Competition in the form of Captain George Flavel, who passed his pilot examination in 1850, put them to task. As the first licensed branch pilot, one approved to pilot both river and bar, Flavel enjoyed a decided edge in the rate war that soon followed.

Captain Paul Corno arrived in 1865 with a steam tug and, for a while, captured much of the business from the wind-bound Flavel. The idea of towing ships across the bar, rather than relying upon capricious winds, intrigued Flavel; he promptly purchased a speedier and larger tug.

Corno's business lagged and soon Flavel monopolized the field and set his rates accordingly. The gradual advent of steamships rendered the bar tugs obsolete. Rates fell and Flavel eventually sold his interests to Asa Simpson. Steam soon allowed a pilot to bring in a ship under its own power. Sail-power faded. With towing jobs no longer necessary, tugs turned to other duties along the mighty Columbia.

---

[1] David Douglas (1798-1834), for whom the Douglas Spruce is named, was a Scottish botanist who arrived in Oregon in 1823. As a collector for the Royal Horticultural Society he discovered many new species of plants, trees and birds and travelled extensively through the northwest states including California and British Columbia. He died in the Sandwich Islands, the victim of a wild bull.

[2] Later sold to Capt. J. J. Winant of Shoalwater for use in his oyster operations.

. . . Mere description can give little idea of the terrors of the bar of the Columbia: all who have seen it have spoken of the wildness of the scene, and the incessant roar of the waters, representing it as one of the most fearful sights that can possibly meet the eye of the sailor.

from the report of the first official survey of the river by the United States Navy under the guidance of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes and his expedition of 1841

JOEL MUNSON, BUSINESS – LIFESAVING

It just seemed natural for Joel Munson to be in the business of lifesaving, which proved fortunate for those unlucky souls who wrecked at the mouth of the Columbia River.

The Munson family lived near the old town of Lexington alongside the Skipanon River west of Young's Bay. Munson, the lighthouse keeper at Cape Disappointment when the bark *Industry* met her fate in 1865 and seventeen lost their lives, found amongst the tons of wreckage washed up on the beach a beat-up but still watertight metallic lifeboat. It became the nucleus of his private lifesaving business.

This unsung hero raised money for additional equipment with several Astoria dances at $2.50 per head. After talking the Lighthouse Department into building a shelter for the metallic lifeboat, he put out a call for volunteers. The government, taking his cue, established a station at Fort Canby and turned the boat over to that department. One year later the *W. B. Scranton* wrecked and Munson, as part of the crew of lifesavers, fought the currents in "his" boat to the successful rescue of thirteen persons. When the *Architect* ran afoul of the Columbia bar, ten more voyagers joined the ranks of those saved.

Munson built and operated the *Magnet*, a small steamer. In 1881 he received an appointment to the Point Adams Lighthouse which he held until 1898.[3]

[3] Located near the present site of Battery Russell.

CHILDAR

When it comes to the rescue of a ship in distress, an alert and ever-ready United States Coast Guard rushes to the scene regardless of weather, type of vessel, or national origin. One example of outstanding service performed by these able seamen occurred on the morning of May 4th, 1934 at 7:07 a.m.

"Sparks," the radioman aboard the United States Coast Guard cutter *Redwing* stationed at Astoria, sat tending his wireless. Through his bulky earphones S O S . . . S O S broke through the static of a heavy southerly gale. The distress call from a location not more than ten miles away electrified the *Redwing*'s crew into instant action. As the seamen dove into their foulweather gear, "Sparks" received chilling news from the stricken ship, who identified herself as the Norwegian freighter *Childar*. She lay helplessly trapped in the smashing waves of the North Spit Bar at the entrance to the Columbia River . . . all hope of abandoning ship went by the boards as the gale-force winds, after tearing her lifeboats into matchwood, now threatened to force her aground.

The small but powerful cutter *Redwing* loosed her lines and headed into thick rain squalls, pea soup gales, and murderous seas. The mighty Columbia River, swollen by a strong spring runoff, forced the navigator to quickly adjust to a forty-five degree leeway from the seven degree heading he normally used during ebb tide to clear the bar. All eyes strained through zero visibility in hopes of sighting familiar bearings. A short break in the surrounding murk revealed the *Childar* rolling in the breakers in the center of North Spit near Buoy 5. Bone crushing seas crashed over the stricken ship's devastated deck in smothering waves.

As the *Redwing*'s commander Lt. A. W. Davis maneuvered to close the gap between the two ships, the storm shut down all visibility. The *Redwing* stood by and rode the storm for four hours before sighting the *Childar* once again. This time the lumber-

Captain Wicklund and his efficient crew effected a safe breeches buoy rescue of the seven stranded seamen.[12]

Shortly after the *Admiral* struck the trestle, thundering seas forced the abandoned vessel through the jagged jetty opening and into the river's mouth. In spite of attempted towing by the tug *Wallula*, the *Admiral* drifted until she broke up.

The Woman's National Relief Association supplied warm clothing to the survivors, then arranged for their transportation to various destinations of their choice. Most all of the shipwreck victims lived long enough to tell open-mouthed grandchildren the unlikely tale of their rescue from a storm-battered, sinking vessel-at-sea by a *railroad train*.

"IF I LIVE, I WILL RETURN . . . AFTER BREAKFAST"

Captain George Flavel carefully maneuvered the 309 ton propeller-steamer *General Warren* through the bar's breakers on January 28, 1852, handed over the ship's command to Captain George Charles Thompson and then embarked to his pilot boat *California*. The seasoned pilot-captain watched the eight-year-old steamer, with her full load of wheat and hogs and a number of passengers bound for San Francisco, slowly buck toward the south as her bow bit into the waves of an increasing gale.

Twin mishaps struck the *General Warren* around midnight . . . her foremast, carried away by a heavy southwest sea, sprang the mast-curlings which, in turn, strained her step, keelson and futtock. The wrenching ship's hold began to take on a steady flow of sea water. Captain Thompson immediately ordered the vessel's pumps into action, but a shifted, wheat-cargo's loose, floating, swollen golden grains completely clogged the overworked pumps. He ordered the ship to return to Astoria for repairs.

The crippled steamer lay off the mouth of the Columbia at dawn, but heavy weather prevented contact with Flavel's pilot schooner until midafternoon. Captain Block, of the pilot service, shouted across angry seas that he was coming aboard; Captain Thompson yelled back that he preferred Flavel's assistance. Flavel complied and immediately boarded the struggling ship.

Thompson quickly took Flavel aside to report three feet of water in the hold, more coming in every second and the pumps hopelessly clogged. "We won't live until morning unless we get into the Columbia. You'll have to take us in."

Flavel, pointing out the breakers crashing across the bar, refused. "It's out of the question. You haven't enough steam to cross before dark; you will have to ride out the storm. Possibly by morning I can take you in."

"Look," desperate urgency rang in Thompson's plea, "I will fire up a lot of fat bacon and dry stuff to make steam. You *must* take us in!"

The pilot shook his head. "I know the bar. A heavy ebb is running. We'll never make it . . . it's suicide."

Nervous passengers crowded around the two arguing captains and one of them accused Flavel of cowardice. Flavel capitulated, his face flushed by the insult. "All right, if you insist. I will take you in, but will not be held responsible for the consequences."

After ordering his boat crew to return to the *California* and follow in the schooner, Flavel turned the steamer's bow at 5:00 p.m. toward the river's darkening, roaring entrance. Suddenly the wind died and the sail-powered schooner fell behind in a helpless wallow.

The *General Warren*, with a poorly responding rudder and tons of sloshing sea in her belly, rode painfully low in the water. Heavy seas rolled over the stricken steamer, sending the water level dangerously close to her fires. Progress against the ebb proved impossible.

[12] Captain Oscar Wicklund prided himself on using only 2½ ounces of powder for hurling the Lyle projectile and its #9 braided line across the foaming abyss; he succeeded on the first try. Surf wagons were normally pulled by hand; on this occasion, however, because of conditions, a horse was rented from a local farmer. The Life Service received a bill for $5.00.

"We'll have to beach her if we're going to save your passengers."

Another heavy sea carried away all but one of the ship's boats; blinding rain turned into a snow storm. The pilot steered for Clatsop spit. Within a few moments, the *General Warren* struck and began to break up. Captain Thompson rolled out a keg of whiskey and, as a defense against the bitter cold, ordered crew and passengers alike to help themselves.

Captain Flavel, a teetotaler, tossed the offending brew over the side. "Captain, we need clear heads if we are to save those aboard." The passengers began to pray.

Flavel stood near the ship's bell as Captain Thompson approached to point out the one remaining ship's boat and ask, "Pilot, do you think you can make it to Astoria and get help for us?"

"I am willing to try, but I don't think we can make it through the breakers."

Thompson called his crew together. "The following men will man the boat with Captain Flavel. First Officer Edward Beverly, Second Mate William Irons, Seaman James Murray, Seaman Isaac Sparrow, passengers E. L. Finch, Henry Marsh and Matt and James Nolan."

Flavel spotted a husky-built man and asked him if he could handle an oar; J. C. Wall joined the crew. The men successfully lowered the ship's boat into the raging sea and with much effort pulled away from the drowning vessel.

Captain Thompson shouted against the roaring wind, "Pilot, you will come back?"

Flavel bellowed back over the clamor of the breaking ship, "If I live, I shall return." The struggling crew and ship's boat disappeared into the gloom.

Only by constant bailing were the men able to keep the wooden boat afloat through the snow-filled night. A grey dawn found them off Scarborough Head. Recognizing the landmark, they pulled southward toward Astoria.

The bark *George and Martha* lay in the stream; Captain Beard immediately complied with Flavel's request for assistance and placed a large whaleboat and men from his own crew at the pilot's disposal. The rescue group headed for the *General Warren* but, strangely enough, Flavel ordered the mission interrupted in order for him to partake of breakfast at Kindred's farmhouse.[13] When the rescuers eventually arrived at the scene of the disaster, all that remained of the *General Warren* was surf-tossed wreckage.

Forty-five bodies and eight hundred hog carcasses washed ashore between Clatsop Spit and Seaside.

To Honbl. the commissioners of Clatsop County—the undersigned citizens of Clatsop County having found upon the sea beach in said county thirteen dead human bodies to the undersigned unknown which bodies were all buried by us in as good a manner as circumstances would allow, some of them were buried in boxes or sheets others were buried without coffins, etc. The dates of burying the same were Feb. 1, 2 persons, on the 10th one, on the 11th two, the 15th one, 21st six, 22nd one. The undersigned were occupied in time as well as expense by hiring Indians etc., All of which we humbly submit to your Honors: for adjustment on the bodies of the above persons were found the following amount of money and watches to-wit, —$197.70 cash, 1 gold watch and silver chain, one silver watch all of which is hereby presented to your Honors.

Signed James Cook, M. S. Smith,
N. Dougherty, and R. W. Morrison

Recd. April 5th 1852, of the board of County Commissioners one hundred and twenty five dollars for services rendered for burying bodies washed on the beach from the steamer "General Warren".

Report of F. Ketchum for interring bodies:

I was told by the Indians that there was a body on the beach near my house on three different occasions. Myself, and two Indians who were living with me went and dug a grave for each of three bodies which came ashore into which we put them without coffins or winding-sheets or other cover-

[13] B. C. Kindred, an early pioneer, and his family lived at the present site of Fort Stevens. In later years he donated land near Hammond for the establishment of a Life Saving Station.

ing except their clothing. I not having any lumber for making coffins, nor any cloths for shrouds. We buried the bodies near the beach above high water mark. There was nothing on the bodies except their clothing, with the exception of one hair brush. Their clothing was of no value and buried with them.

signed: Frederic Ketchum
April 7th 1852

Recd. April 7 1852 of the Board of County Commissioners fifteen Dollars for services in burying the bodies washed ashore from the wreck of the "General Warren".

signed: Frederic Ketchum

Captain George Flavel received a medal on which was engraved, "Presented by the citizens of Portland to Captain George Flavel for his praiseworthy exertion in rendering assistance to the passengers and crew of the steamship General Warren at the mouth of the Columbia on the 31st of January, 1852." The reverse side of the medal featured a picture of a whaleboat leaving a sinking vessel with the inscription, "If I live I shall return."

James Swan discovered the vessel's stern section in 1854 at Copalis, Washington, forty miles north of the wreck scene. The actions and conversation of Capt. Flavel, Capt. Thompson and the others aboard the doomed vessel are as told by Mrs. George Flavel to historian Fred Lockley. The story appeared in the *Portland Daily Journal*, September 8, 9, 10, 1922.

ROSECRANS

"We are rapidly breaking to pieces on the bar.... Good-bye." That terse message marked the demise of one of the unluckiest ships afloat; it also gave notice that thirty-three seamen aboard the *Rosecrans*, ex-*Methven Castle*,[14] were within minutes of finding a watery grave at the mouth of the mighty Columbia.

The *Methven Castle*, too slow to remain in the Castle Mail Service, was sold to the United States in 1898 for use as a troop transport during the Spanish-American War. She proved totally unsatisfactory in that capacity and, with the end of hostilities, found herself on the auction block. Associated Oil Company bought the vessel, converted her into a tanker, and put her into service as the *Rosecrans*.

While sailing off the coast of California, she became unmanageable in a gale and was tossed ashore; her quartermaster and carpenter lost their lives. Although she was listed as a total loss, Associated Oil Company refloated the vessel and ordered her towed to San Francisco for re-building. Five months later, as she lay tied to a California landing, the *Rosecrans* caught fire while loading oil; once again, the company re-built her.

While en route to Portland with 19,000 barrels of oil, she approached the Columbia River bar under gale-force winds and a blinding, foggy sleet. The 2nd Officer on the bridge mistook the North Head Light for that of the Lightship. Evidence indicates that the 2,976 ton tanker bore head-on, up and over the south jetty, for paint scrapings and torn hull plates were found more than midway out on the rocks several days following the tragedy.

The mortally wounded ship lay on the bottom of the Peacock Spit with her decks barely above water... each passing breaker split her asunder. By seven o'clock the next morning, little remained of the *Rosecrans*.

The 3rd quartermaster clung to a splintered plank and washed ashore seven miles distant from the wreck. Three seamen hung to the *Rosecrans*'s rigging for five hours and, to keep circulation going, ran the ratlines, even though one of them suffered a broken leg. He died, as did thirty-two others.

[14] The *Methven Castle* began her spotted career in Glasgow, Scotland in 1883, just one year after several misguided Irish Nationalist dynamiters committed the notorious Phoenix Park murders. Lord Charles Cavendish's assassination prompted the English government to bring the plotters to a swift and sure justice. Carey, one of the assassins, turned state's evidence and thus beat the noose, but not death. He became fearful for his life and, with coat collar turned up and suspicious of every strange sound, surreptitiously booked passage for Cape Town, South Africa on the new vessel. An Irish "Death to Informers" squad gunned him down the minute he stepped off the gangplank.

Text of a class on
North Coast Ship wrecks
taught by Don Marshall,
author of Oregon Shipwrecks,
in Washington.

Shared with CCHS in
May of 1994.
Permission to copy
given by Don Marshall.